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ABSTRACT

This study attempted a comprehensive, critical assessment of Total Quality Management (TQM) initiatives in higher education. A survey of 25 institutions (including community colleges, private four-year colleges and universities and public colleges) with experience with TQM was developed and used. The survey utilized , attitude scales designed to measure the seven criteria used in the evaluation procedures for a national TQM award, and open-ended questions that examined benefits and frustrations and predictions for the future. Eighty-three individuals from 22 institutions responded. Results indicated that institutions are using TQM most commonly in administrative units and that resistance to TQM in the academic areas is perceived. Institutions reported that they implemented TQM due to external influences, specific events, budget and competition pressures, or an evolution of interest. Many noted confusion or lack of specificity about implementation plans. Many found flow charts to be the most useful TQM tool. Respondents noted that the cultural and attitudinal change that sees students as customers was the most essential and the most difficult. Key benefits included giving people a voice, more listening, climate change, bringing people together, and problem prevention. (JB)

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